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Written statement* submitted by the Amuta for NGO Responsibility, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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Palestinian Exploitation of Children as Weapons of War

On June 12, three Israeli teens – Gilad Shaar, Naftali Frankel, and Eyal Yifrah – were abducted from a bus stop and murdered by Hamas terrorists. Their bodies were mutilated and discarded in a shallow grave only to be discovered two weeks after their disappearance. The Israeli public collectively engaged in intense grief and rallied in support of the boys' families. In contrast, the Palestinian public widely celebrated the crime, adopting a three-fingered salute honoring the "heroic" perpetrators and mocking the grieving families on social media. Coupled with these celebrations was a major intensification by the Hamas terrorist organization of rocket attacks on Israeli population centers targeting civilians. Many of these missile strikes hit kindergartens, schools, and synagogues. The massive increase in rocket fire escalated into a war in which Hamas and other Palestinian terror groups embedded their war infrastructure and weaponry within homes, schools, and mosques to carry out war crimes.

The kidnapping and murder of the Israelis and the Palestinian response highlight the use of children as an integral part of the Palestinian war strategy targeting the right of the Jewish people to sovereign equality. As innocents, children are to be shielded as much as possible from the horrors of adult conflict and violence. Yet, children have long been the target of choice for Palestinian terrorists, just as they are for other Islamist terror groups such as ISIS, Boko Haram, and the Taliban. The Palestinian tactic of targeting children is not new, but tragically there are many recent examples: In 2011 Hamas launched a heat-seeking missile at an Israeli school bus, killing a 16-year old boy. In 2010, Palestinian terrorists associated with the PFLP murdered five members of the Fogel family, stabbing to death two small children and decapitating a 3-month old baby. In 2008, a Palestinian gunman open fired on children studying in a Jerusalem school library, murdering eight. In 2004, Gazan terrorists affiliated with Islamic Jihad shot at point blank range and killed Tali Hatuel, eight-months pregnant, along with her 4 young daughters aged two to ten. And on August 23, a Hamas mortar killed 4-year old Daniel Tragerman as his father struggled to usher him into a safe room.

Palestinian terrorists, with official backing, have detonated suicide bombs in pizza shops, buses, weddings, bar mitzvah celebrations, and malls to inflict the most casualties as possible on the defenseless. Many Hamas terror tunnels uncovered during the 2014 war contained entrances near Israeli kindergartens. Like the reaction to the June kidnappings, outrage from the Palestinian community for these atrocities is rare, if expressed at all.

The Palestinian assault, however, is not limited to Israeli children. Palestinian children, too, are exploited as weapons of war: Pictures abound of Palestinian babies dressed as suicide bombers and brandishing arms. Children's TV programs, many sponsored by the Palestinian Authority itself, preach jihad, advocate genocide against Jews and infidels, and glorify martyrdom. A young girl on a program recently aired on Hamas TV was encouraged by the host to be in the police when she grew up so that she could "shoot Jews … all of them." After years of being educated with incitement, Palestinian pre-teens are then pressed into service by "popular committees" to engage in riots and violent confrontations with Israeli soldiers. Older kids are sent to hurl firebombs and slingshot projectiles. Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and Fatah's Martyrs Brigades enlist teens to be suicide bombers and to commit other atrocities against Israeli civilians. More than 160 children have reportedly died building Hamas terror tunnels. According to media accounts, in January 2015, more than 10,000 teens graduated from Hamas terror training camps – priming them to be child soldiers and commit atrocities against Israeli civilians.

Even rock-throwing, which has often been deadly, puts Palestinian minors at risk for arrest and jail time. The horrific and reprehensible murder of 16-year old Mohammed Abu Khdeir was also exploited by these committees to incite teens to engage in violent rioting and mass destruction of property.

In addition to turning minors into combatants, Palestinians deliberately place children at risk by co-locating weapons and terror infrastructure inside schools, hospitals, and mosques. Hamas officials have appeared on TV calling on Gazans to serve as human shields and to ignore Israeli warnings of pending military activity. Terrorists adorn civilian dress and launch rockets and other weapons from within civilian areas to maximize loss during retaliatory attacks. According to IDF estimates, more than 25% of Palestinian rockets fall short of their Israeli civilian targets within Gaza. Many Palestinian children have been killed as a result, including 11-month old Jihad Misharawi in November 2012 and a three-year old girl in July. On July 28, a Hamas rocket landed at the Al Shati refugee camp, reportedly killing at least

eight Palestinian children. Hamas and other Palestinians parade and pose the bodies of dead Palestinian children for the media as part of their propaganda.

The most shocking aspect of this deliberate disregard for children's lives and dignity, however, is the enabling of these crimes by the UN, the EU, and so-called human rights organizations. UN institutions and officials, particularly at the HRC, look the other way and even in some cases praise these abuses as "resistance." During the latest Hamas war, dozens of rockets have been found hidden in UNRWA schools, and media reports have shown children playing on rocket launchers located just outside UN shelters. Many rocket launches have taken place from within or near UN facilities. Yet, UNRWA officials have remained silent or only offered half-hearted condemnations of these war crimes. The UN claimed it would conduct an inquiry into these incidents, but has yet to provide any details on the investigation or publish any results. In addition to aiding and abetting Hamas' war effort, independent research has also uncovered mass incitement to violence, antisemitism, and denial of the Holocaust by UNRWA teachers.[1]

The EU funds many TV programs and other media that perpetuate terrorist indoctrination and incitement. The EU also partners, through NGO projects, with the Palestinian Struggle Coordinating Committee, responsible for organizing protests that frequently turn violent. EU largesse has also been used by the PA to pay salaries to convicted terrorists serving their sentences in prison.

NGOs like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch generally bury condemnations of these violations against children in lengthy publications accusing Israel of war crimes. Calls for accountability or an end to impunity for terror perpetrators are rarely made. Measures such as universal jurisdiction lawsuits, boycott campaigns, and lobbying for ICC prosecutions (the NGOs' weapons of choice against Israel) are never wielded against Palestinians for their crimes against children. Such complicity only emboldens future acts and represents the total inversion of morality, human rights, and law.

In April 2014, the Palestinian Authority "unity" government purported to join more than fifteen international human rights conventions. Yet, the Palestinians have disregarded every one of these agreements since their accession and have committed thousands of violations. The on-going Palestinian exploitation of children violates dozens of provisions in these treaties, including Articles 12, 34, 48, 51, 52, 77 of the Additional Protocol I of the Geneva Conventions; Articles 3, 17, 32, 36, 38 and the Optional Protocol of the Convention on the Rights of the Child; and Articles 1-3, 5 of the Convention Against Genocide.

The depraved exploitation and abuse of children as targets and weapons by Palestinians must end. Yet, these abominable tactics will persist so long as the UN, members of the international community, and NGOs continue to enable these atrocities.

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[1] http://elderofziyon.blogspot.co.il/2014/11/online-unrwa-teachers-group-approves-of.html